



## Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

## SOUTH AFRICA AND EUROPE.

BY THE LATE JEAN DE BLOCH, RUSSIAN COUNCILLOR OF STATE,  
AND AUTHOR OF "THE WAR OF THE FUTURE."

---

No historic phenomenon is more remarkable than the persistency with which disastrous but avoidable events recur again and again, in spite of the warning which each generation of sufferers bequeaths to its successors. It is a truism to say that history repeats itself, and many take that proverb to imply that historic events, whether fortunate or disastrous, must inevitably reproduce themselves in every stage of social development, owing to a presumed identity of human sentiments, passions, and aspirations, in all ages. Others put the historic truth into the convenient formula, that human nature is unteachable. From the very dawn of history, unjust warfare, corruption, and religious and racial persecution have been ruinous to prosperous states; yet we find all these evils, with little diminished vigor, flourishing under various forms to-day. Yet, in reality, we cannot explain this fact by any such easy phrase as that "human nature is everywhere the same," or that "human nature is unteachable." The broad lessons of history are, on the contrary, very well understood by all civilized peoples; the general agreement as to what those lessons are is, perhaps, the best proof of that.

The truth is that nations, when they embark upon some fatal policy—upon a disastrous war, which ruins them from outside, or upon misgovernment, which consumes them from within—do not do so because they are ignorant of the lesson of history that such courses are invariably followed by destruction, but because, under the influence of passion and of unwise counsel, they have become firmly convinced that their own case is exceptional, and excluded by some magic exemption from the operation of the historic laws which have been revealed by the history of the past.

When disaster follows, the suffering nations still fail to recognize that their case was in no way exceptional, and that their misfortunes arose merely from inability to regard themselves objectively, as they regard other nations, both present and past. They refuse even to recognize the immediate causes of their disasters, and cast about them for far-fetched and improbable explanations. The French, in 1870, having entered upon a war without preparation, and having suffered the natural consequences, even went so far as to attribute their defeat to treachery. In like manner, the English, being unwilling to accept an ordinary explanation of the remarkable series of events which have hitherto characterized the South-African War, have fabricated an ingenious and wholly unnecessary explanation, which has shrouded in mystery the meaning of events which, in reality, are explicable in a perfectly simple manner. This explanation, which may be summed up in the words of its exponents, as "the peculiar conditions of South-African warfare," meets with universal acceptance in England, and there is a tendency to accept it among all peoples not openly hostile to England. Yet it is probable that no delusion was ever more threatening to the peace of mankind, for its acceptance means that Europe and the world will never learn a lesson the importance of which for the welfare of the world is incalculably great.

It was natural that the nations of the European Continent, in their sympathy with the two republics, should seek to explain the defeats which the Boers continued to inflict upon the English even long after the regular Boer defence had broken down, by declaring that the English were inferior to the Boers in every military quality. It was natural, too, that English critics should refuse to admit the truth of this. Some other explanation had in the nature of things to be put forward. As I shall hereafter show, a very obvious explanation was to be found in the changed conditions of offensive warfare, which have resulted from the improvement of rifles and artillery, the employment of smokeless powder, and the more general adoption of the spade as an arm of the first importance. British critics, whether military or civilian, would, however, have none of this. Just as the French in 1870 raised the cry of "Treachery!" the British proceeded to fabricate a complicated network of pretended causes to explain why it was that the conquest of South Africa was necessarily

accompanied by defeats and delays. The distance of the country from Europe, its vastness, its configuration, the difficulty of protecting communications, the sparseness of the population, the lack of a local food-supply, and a hundred minor conditions arising therefrom, were the real causes, said the British apologists, of the British difficulties and disasters.

Now this theory is, on its face, very plausible; but doubt is immediately thrown upon it when we observe that, though all these conditions are permanent, and were well-known to every one long before the war broke out, they were never adduced beforehand as conditions likely to cause disaster, but were only brought forward after disaster had actually occurred. The doubt is increased when we know that, before the war, arguments of a totally different kind were employed to show that disaster would occur to the British arms, or to the arms of any other Power which should undertake an offensive war without an enormous superiority in numbers and resources. These latter arguments together make up the "changed conditions of warfare" theory, or, in other words, the theory which claims that, under modern conditions, the defensive possesses an inherent superiority, which can be overcome only by overwhelming forces.

The fact that this theory was broached before the war broke out, whereas the rival explanation of "peculiar conditions" was a belated afterthought, stands *primâ facie* in its favor. But the fact is that the British argument will not bear a moment's examination. I shall deal shortly with some of these explanations, to show how unsubstantial they are. Firstly, as to the vastness of the country and the consequent difficulty of guarding communications, we know that Napoleon marched all over Europe, and that history is full of examples of hostile armies traversing, again and again, vaster countries than the two South-African republics. Still more significant is the fact that nearly all the serious defeats sustained by the British took place at an inconsiderable distance from their base, and when communications were perfectly safe. The vastness of the country and threatened communications played no part whatever in the battles of Colenso, Stormberg, and Magersfontein. These factors had, of course, an enormous effect upon the strategical development of the war, and were largely responsible for its prolongation; but they did not affect at all the tactical conditions of individual engagements.

Still more strange is the assertion of British apologists, that the sparseness of the population was one of their great obstacles. The British enjoyed the advantage of being opposed only by a handful of Boers, yet their apologists fall into the inconsistency of wanting them at the same time to have whatever advantage attaches to campaigning in a thickly settled country! If South Africa were peopled as thickly as Europe, the British might have been able to live on the country, but they would have been opposed by several millions of men instead of fifty thousand. To claim, therefore, that the sparseness of the population was a "peculiar difficulty" of South-African warfare, while ignoring the advantage of having to fight a scanty population, is surely the height of absurdity.

Even the splendid climate of South Africa has been libelled as a "peculiar condition of South-African warfare." And so it is; but only in the sense that every climate but his own is a peculiar condition to an invader. The climate of South Africa differed from that of England chiefly in being drier, and therefore more suitable for campaigning; and for the British, who have fought in every country on the globe, to put forward such an argument, only shows how great is the strain imposed upon the apologist. Similarly, we find that the configuration of South Africa is infinitely more open, and presents less obstacles to an invader, than any equal area in Western or Central Europe. Nor did the distance of seven thousand miles which separates the Cape from England play any considerable part, and it may be doubted whether the British could have sent their 350,000 men from London to Edinburgh with as little difficulty as they experienced in sending them from Southampton to Cape Town and Durban.

Now, the facts which I have pointed out completely destroy the value of the British explanation. Are we, therefore, to fall back upon the Continental theory, that the Boers were in every way superior soldiers to the British? This theory is equally untenable. The earlier stages of the war disprove it. At these stages, the British were very considerably inferior to the Boers in numbers and, in some respects, in armament. Yet, despite their numerical superiority, the Boers, who, we are told, were superior to the British in soldierly qualities, never gained a real advantage over their enemies. The three unfortified towns against which they advanced in great numbers and in exultant

spirits, held out triumphantly. Wherever the Boers attacked, they were driven back with heavy loss. It was the same at Ladysmith, at Kimberley, and at Mafeking. When reinforcements arrived, the British began a series of counter-attacks upon the Boer positions, and were repulsed as decisively. That neither side was successful in attack, though each was triumphant in defence, seems to me to be like the key of the whole situation.

The key of the situation, in short, lies in the fact that the South-African War confirms what had been repeatedly affirmed in advance by myself and by those authorities upon whom I relied in preparing my book, that "new conditions of warfare" had arisen, the main characteristic of which was that the strength of the attack, both physical and moral, had declined to an extraordinary extent since the last great war. It is impossible to explain in an article the basis of this theory; but it may be summed up by saying that the improvements in the rifle and in artillery, and the universal employment of field intrenchments, altogether operate to the advantage of the defensive. It is much less important to explain why this is so, than to prove that it was so; and I shall, therefore, give a short summary of the way in which the war vindicated the thesis.

It is necessary to premise that, although I have treated these facts in detail elsewhere, I have never before attempted to summarize their consecutive effect. It is not very easy to apply the canons of logic to an art so arbitrary as war, as to which there is so much in dispute; yet it is no exaggeration to say that nearly every individual event in South Africa either directly or indirectly proves the superiority of defensive warfare. Even those few facts which seem to prove the contrary, on examination are often the strongest bases of the argument. We know, for instance, that attacks sometimes succeeded; but we know not the less certainly that any such attacks were undertaken with unexampled superiority of numbers, or were accompanied by turning movements. We know, also, that the defence occasionally broke down, as did the defence of Cronje at Paardeberg; but we know that the defence broke down not in consequence of the effectiveness of the attack, but owing to starvation and the hopelessness of relief, under conditions which would not be repeated in a European war.

I will take the question of reconnaissance first, since that,

though not an arm of combat, is the most indispensable of the preliminaries to attack. Before the outbreak of the South-African War, I laid it down in my book, as the result of observation, that "smokeless powder, and modern arms and ammunition insure long ignorance of a defender's exact position, and in consequence serious loss before the true position is ascertained. . . the period of uncertainty may cause immense losses to the attacker." This affirmation was based partly upon results observed at manœuvres in Europe, and partly upon the reports of the European *attachés* during the war in Cuba. It was in every way confirmed by experience in South Africa. The attackers were almost invariably in ignorance of the defenders' position, with the result that before the truth was ascertained they had suffered such severe losses as necessitated abandonment of the attack. At Stormberg, the British marched, in total ignorance, to within a few hundred yards of the Boer trenches, and in consequence were driven back in flight, leaving a third of their men in the hands of the Boers. The correspondents relate that, even after the Boers had opened fire, the British were totally unable to locate them. At Magersfontein, the experience of the attackers was the same. The Highland Brigade there lost a quarter of their strength in a few minutes, owing to their ignorance of the Boer position. All over the battlefield the British suffered from the same difficulty of locating their enemy. To quote the *Daily Mail* correspondent: "While the Highlanders were fighting on the left, the Guards advanced on the right across the open veldt, and fought an invisible foe for fifteen hours." At Modder River, and at Colenso, the defenders were invisible, and their smokeless powder gave no clue to their position. At Modder River we read that "most of the officers and men on the British side never saw a Boer, and were not even certain on which side of the river the Boers were."

This is entirely a "new condition of warfare"; and its effect is that the *sine quâ non* of attack, that the attacker should be exactly informed as to the defender's position, has been made unattainable under the altered conditions of war. I shall now attempt to show how the South-African War has shown a similar decline in the reliability of other auxiliaries of attack.

All tacticians are agreed that an infantry attack upon an entrenched position must be preceded by a vigorous artillery bom-

bardment, the object of which is both to cause loss to the defenders and to damage their *morale*. Without this, it is agreed, no infantry attack can have the reasonable chance of success which is necessary if attack is to be undertaken. Now, the last great wars tend to show that the effect of artillery for this purpose is very much exaggerated. "At Plevna," said Todleben, "we would sometimes fire a whole day for the purpose of killing a single Turk." Since then, artillery has been improved enormously in range, accuracy, and explosive effect, Professor Langlois calculating that the guns in use to-day are forty times more effective than those of 1870. Yet, in spite of this, the lesson of Plevna was not only repeated, but emphasized, by the experiences of South Africa. Every one of the great battles of the South African War was begun by a heavy bombardment; yet in no case is there any record of the Boers suffering sufficiently to shake their *morale*, much less to drive them from their intrenchments. At Enslin, two batteries of field-guns, and several heavy naval guns, bombarded the Boer trenches, until, to quote a correspondent, "it seemed impossible that any living thing could be left in them." Yet only twenty-one dead Boers were found after the battle, mostly killed by rifle fire. At Modder River, three thousand heavy projectiles were poured into the Boer position; yet the Boer Army held its ground, retiring later only in consequence of a flank attack. At Colenso, the British attackers had forty-six guns, and the Boers only twelve. The correspondents reported that the Boer position on Fort Wylie, "as the result of the exploding shells, looked like a volcano in full eruption"; yet the Boer guns on this very position were fought to the end. At Paardeberg, 4,000 Boers were shut up in a small space, and subjected for ten days to the fire of from fifty to a hundred field-guns, heavy naval guns, and howitzers, some of the latter firing 120-pound Lyddite shells. The result of this unprecedented bombardment was that 170 men were killed and wounded, at least half of whom suffered during the infantry attack which preceded the bombardment. The lesson of the war, in short, was that artillery was almost wholly ineffective when employed against intrenchments. That this was not due to any inherent defects in the guns, or in the manner in which they were served, is shown by the fact that the Boer bombardment of Ladysmith and Kimberley was equally without serious effect. It is also



shown by another very striking incident. I refer to the ill-fated attack upon Spion-Kop, when the Boer artillery, employed *against the attacker*, put out of action in one night some 1,300 men. In this action, the British, owing to the stony nature of the ground, and the neglect to despatch an efficient engineering corps to the occupied position, were unable to intrench themselves. Hence the heavy losses, and the completed demonstration of the fact that, while the power of modern artillery is unprecedented, it can be used only with effect against an exposed enemy, or, in other words, against an advancing attacker.

It is, of course, argued by those who still believe in the efficacy of artillery in attack, that the effect of gun fire is chiefly moral. But those who thus argue forget that this moral effect is merely the consequence of fear, and that, when riflemen safely sheltered behind intrenchments realize that they have nothing to fear from the enemy's guns, the moral effect upon them will be nil. This was the case in the Transvaal War, where the severest artillery bombardment never drove the Boers from their positions.

In these facts, which are not disputed (though attempts have been made to explain them away), we see another element in the increment of strength to the defensive. The complete failure of the artillery is, of course, entirely due to the more perfect intrenchments of to-day, and to the invisibility of those intrenchments which results from the employment of smokeless powder by their defenders. Yet the British, in all these engagements, were enormously superior to the Boers in number of guns, and in supply of ammunition. In an ordinary war between Powers of equal or almost equal strength (the two alliances of Continental Europe for example), there will be no such disparity in armament or numbers. The defender will not only not be inferior in artillery to the attacker, but, more probably, superior, since the fortifications on the European frontiers are permanent and equipped with heavier guns than the attacker can conveniently transport.

If this be so, we must conclude that, in the war of the future, infantry will be required to attack without either the moral or material encouragement which was formerly supplied by successful artillery bombardment. This leads directly to the question of infantry attack under modern conditions, and here also we find a change entirely to the advantage of the defenders. In

*The War of the Future*, I examined this question; and it seemed to me indisputable that, excluding accidental factors, a superiority in numbers which no European Power would be likely to possess would be required in order to carry out a successful frontal attack. Experiments made at my instance in Switzerland showed that theoretically this superiority would not be less than eight to one; and the studies of von Rohne and others led them to similar conclusions. Accidental circumstances play so large a part in any individual battle that it is, of course, impossible to gain any direct confirmation of these figures from single battles in South Africa. But the general experience of the frontal attacks attempted in Natal and in the Western Cape Colony shows decisively that an enormous superiority is indispensable, and that, even with such a superiority, success cannot always be relied upon. The one great instance of a Boer frontal attack in force (the attack upon Ladysmith on January 6th, 1900), resulted in total failure. It is necessary to cite this first, lest the objection be made that the British attacks, which I shall now deal with, failed only because of some inherent defect in British methods. These British attacks were numerous, and all resulted in total failures. The only battle of the war in which the Boers were really routed, as the result of a direct attack, was at Elandslaagte, where the British outnumbered the Boers by five to one, and carried out at the same time a flank attack. Attacks at Belmont and Enslin resulted in the withdrawal of the Boers from their positions in good order. But in every other case, the British frontal attacks failed, even when made by forces outnumbering the Boers by four or five to one. At Magersfontein, 13,000 British made an attack upon half that number of Boers, and were decisively defeated. At Colenso, 20,000 British attempted a frontal attack upon a fourth of the number of Boers and were defeated with a loss of eleven guns. At Paardekop, 16,000 to 20,000 British, with enormously superior artillery, attempted a frontal attack upon 4,000 exhausted Boers and were driven back with a loss of 1,400 men, the Boer loss being less than a hundred. The Boer loss in most of these South-African battles is not definitely known; but most reports agree that the intrenched Boers invariably lost less than a tenth of the number which they put out of action among the attackers.

All this confirms the belief, which is becoming more and more

prevalent among military men, that the frontal attack, as a method of offence, is tending to pass out of practical warfare. The consequence in European warfare must be very great. The European alliances are equal in numbers and differ only in speed of mobilization. If the relations between attack and defence were now what they have been in the past, this difference in the rapidity with which mobilization is carried out would play a great, probably a decisive, part. But, in the words of von der Goltz, "the growing power of resistance of every military unit now enables a single division to accept battle with a whole army corps, if it be confident of reinforcement within a reasonable time." On the European frontiers, before the smaller forces of the slowly mobilizing Power can be driven from their positions, the slower Power will have completed the concentration of its troops, and equality will then be established. This conclusion is inevitably driven in upon us when we consider the conditions of European frontiers, and the exceptional thinness of modern defensive lines. The French frontier, in case of an attempted invasion by Germany, is as good an instance as any other. The Franco-German frontier is only 160 miles in length, and it is studded with fortresses and anterior defensive lines, which arose as the result of the war of 1870-71. Within forty-eight hours, the French could concentrate upon this frontier a force of 300,000 men. That is to say, they would have an average of 2,000 men per mile for the entire frontier. Twenty years ago, such a line would have been thin to the point of danger. But the magazine rifle has changed all that. At Magersfontein, the Boers held all day an improvised position some twenty miles long with less than 6,000 men; that is, they had only 300 men a mile, sixteen times less than was formerly regarded as the necessary strength per mile. In the other battles of the South-African War, the Boer defensive lines were equally thin; yet, with the magazine rifle, they were always able to attain sufficient fire-intensity to defeat any attempt to break through their lines. At Waterloo, the British had more men concentrated on *two* miles of defences than the whole Boer Army; yet their fire was not sufficient to prevent the French reaching close to their lines, and in some cases even penetrating them. With the modern rifle, however, we find 300 men per mile developing an intensity of fire sufficient to decimate any body of troops attempting to approach.

in close formation. It must be concluded, therefore, that the 2,000 men per mile which the French, immediately upon the outbreak of war, could throw upon their permanently fortified frontiers, would constitute a defence formidable enough to baffle any attempt to break through in the short time which would elapse before the arrival of reinforcements.

This, it seems to me, is the chief tactical problem presented by the failures of infantry attack in South Africa. The facts cited undoubtedly lead to the conclusion that, as in the case of artillery, modern improvements in infantry weapons have altogether favored the defensive. I shall not attempt to deal here with the complex and disputed question of the rôle of cavalry in attack. But cavalry, or rather mounted infantry, had an enormous importance in the carrying out of the indirect offensive in South Africa, so great indeed that many European critics pretend to see in the new arm of mounted men who fight on foot a solution of the vexed problem of the difficulty of attack, and a counter-agent to the defensive advantages which result from the use of improved firearms. In the later stages of the war, after the first defence of the Boers had been broken down, Lord Roberts employed vast numbers of mounted men in his attacks, and the system adopted had a considerable, though limited, success. The British commander engaged the enemy with infantry and artillery in front, and despatched his mounted men to threaten their flanks. As the Boers were always from five to ten times less numerous, this system, of course, proved efficacious. But, though the British invariably forced the Boers out of their positions, they never succeeded in scoring the decisive success of cutting off their retreat. The Boers not only withdrew in safety, but took with them their slow transport and position guns of a weight never before employed in the field. This fact is, perhaps, the most important of all in the interpretation of the South-African War; for it shows, as will be seen, that, under modern conditions, even if attack should succeed, the defender has opportunities for orderly withdrawal which he did not possess in the past. Fifty years ago, the defenders, instead of being forced slowly from their positions and left to retreat almost unmolested, would have been routed at the point of the bayonet, cut to pieces by the pursuing cavalry; their guns would have been captured, and a great part of their men killed and taken prisoners. But owing to the im-

mense distances between the combatants in the South-African battles, it was constantly found that, before the attacker's cavalry had ridden far enough to threaten the defender's rear, the horses were so exhausted that effective pursuit was out of the question. This change eminently constitutes a "new condition of war," for it results from a new factor—that is, the long range of modern rifles and artillery. Like the other changes enumerated, it is decidedly to the advantage of the defender; for while, in case of defeat, it insures him against rout and destruction, it offers no counterbalancing advantage to the attacker. The range of rifles, and the endurance of horses are, moreover, not accidental or temporary factors, and will work out their results in Europe no less certainly than they did in South Africa.

It should be added, however, that the limitations of cavalry in the offensive, which were shown so plainly in South Africa, must be even more marked in any European war. In the first place, there will be no initial superiority of numbers such as there was in South Africa. In the second place, the continuous fortifications upon all the European frontiers make it almost impossible even to attempt those flanking movements for which mounted men are so eminently fitted. There is no single point upon the French frontier where a German army, mounted or unmounted, could turn the defender's lines. The whole frontier is lined with continuous fortifications, which must first be carried by direct attack—a method which would almost certainly fail. There are, indeed, two considerable gaps left in the lines of defences, but these gaps have been left undefended on purpose, and are so situated that any attempt to enter them for the purpose of turning the French rear would inevitably result in the invaders being cut off from their base and captured. But it is hardly necessary to discuss a contingency so improbable. It is sufficient to point out that all successful turning movements in South Africa were carried out in a flat, unfortified country, with a superiority quite inconceivable in Europe.

In view of the purely tactical character of all these factors, it is an absurdity to pretend that they do not teach a lesson to the whole world. Their applicability to the military conditions of modern Europe cannot be disputed. The Great Powers of Europe are to-day divided into two armed camps, each camp differing hardly a hair's-breadth in the sum of its numbers, arma-

ment, efficiency, and national spirit. On the frontiers rise impregnable fortifications, executed on a scale and with a completeness unknown in the past; and between ancient enemies stands the invisible wall of an enhanced defensive, which, arising from human progress itself, shows no practicable opening for human assault. By these changes, we are brought face to face with the practical disappearance of war from one of its most ancient domains. For can it be conceived that any statesman will be so blind, or any mob so passionate, as to rush into a struggle whence neither valor nor genius can draw any compensating result? Be it added that, happily, there is now no question pending in Europe likely to provoke acute enmity. Dynastic and religious wars are things of the past. Frontiers are everywhere sharply delimited, if not exactly according to racial divisions, at least more closely corresponding to that ideal delimitation than they have ever been before. On the Continent of Europe, even rumors of wars have passed away. In the decade of 1880-1890, seldom a month passed without rumors being published in the European press, on apparently good authority, that France and Germany, or Russia and Germany, were secretly mobilizing with a view to immediate hostilities. Such rumors are seldom heard to-day.

It is argued, with apparent plausibility, that all conclusions as to the impracticability of war which are based upon equality of numbers, training and armaments, are unreliable, because they leave the undetermined human factor out of account. I remember once discussing this problem with a professor at the French *École Militaire*, who put the obvious objection in admirable form. He says:

"Suppose you are right as to the equality of the European alliances. Assume, if you will, that numbers, armaments, training, are in the sum total practically equal—that does not necessarily imply that neither side can win. In these great organizations, apparently so equal, there is an infinite ground for dissimilarities of much greater importance than mere inequality of numbers. There are varying degrees of faith in the justice of one's cause, confidence in one's leaders, historic influences, and individual genius—the possibility of a great commander coming to the front under the stress of events. All these factors may favor one army, which in outward appearance enjoys no superiority. Finally, there is Accident. The interception of a despatch, the wrecking of a train, a sudden fall of snow, a stray bullet killing a trusted commander, the

late arrival of expected supports, the inexplicable panics which set in without cause—all these accidents have made history in the past, and in the future any one of them may turn the tide of an otherwise indecisive combat. War has always depended upon accidents as much as upon acts, and it will continue to do so."

This argument expresses admirably the objection to the thesis that the mechanism of war has perfected itself beyond the verge of practicability. It is not, however, difficult to find an answer. If war does break out, the human factor and the factor of accident will undoubtedly play a considerable part. But there are reasons why they cannot play such a decisive part as they have often played in the past. The law of averages applies in all human affairs. If two men toss pennies half a dozen times, one may possibly win all six. But if they toss a hundred times there is no human possibility that one will win all hundred; it is a hundred to one that the winnings will be fairly equally divided. This may be taken as a parable to illustrate the part which accident is likely to play in the prolonged and complex warfare of the future. A hundred years ago, a single victory, the fall of a single fortress, was often sufficient to determine a war. But with the numerous and vast armies, the endless and repeated defensive lines, and the inexhaustible reserves of modern Europe, a single battle decided by a single lucky chance cannot have a decisive result. There will be innumerable battles, innumerable fortresses to be besieged, and scores of armies operating and co-operating. In such circumstances, accident may play a correspondingly great, but it will necessarily be an equal, part. An intercepted telegram, or the late arrival of supports, may decide one engagement; but they cannot materially influence a whole war. It would require numerous favorable accidents to end it. And, just as in tossing pennies a hundred times, there is in the complex warfare of modern times no possibility of a sequence of accidental circumstances favoring one side.

But, even if the gambler's chance could determine a conflict, as it sometimes did in the past, we have in the facts above mentioned an excellent reason why peace is likely to be kept. No statesman ever went to war relying upon chance alone. Wars are determined upon because the determining nation is convinced of the superiority of its numbers, the better training of its men, the perfection of its armaments—that is to say, it is assured of

its superiority in those factors in which we know that no superiority at present exists. Nor can statesmen go to war any longer with a light heart, trusting to the genius of a proved commander. Since the passing away of the great captains of 1870 and 1877-78, no country in Europe can claim the superiority which rests upon the possession of a great captain. Moltke, Blumenthal, Gourko, and Skobelev are no more. Their successors may be as great as they, but their names and their country are yet unknown. They can be proved only by events; but, so far as the calculations of statesmen go, they do not exist.

There is, happily, another reason why war upon the European Continent is unlikely to break out. That is the extreme caution of modern European statesmen, their distrust of popular agitation, and their nervous dread of responsibility. The Transvaal War, in this respect, has taught to the world a lesson incomparably more valuable than even that military lesson which I have attempted to indicate. From its beginning to its present uncertain stage, it has been a continuous and uninterrupted exposure of the vanity of complacent thoughts which, the proverb tells us, are the children of vain wishes. Not merely every military, but every political, every social, every material, every spiritual consideration relied upon, and trumpeted abroad in premature pæans of victory, has been found to be a baseless edifice, which the first breeze of actual fact has overthrown. The collapse of the airy castle of Imperial France, thirty years ago, was not more instructive. There the lesson was sudden. In South Africa, however, delusion has followed delusion, and the wreck of each has hardly been complete before another has been planted on its ruins. It is the soldiers and statesmen, not the visionaries and philanthropists, who have been led astray by dreams. Can it be believed that, with the lesson before their eyes of this general ensnaring of the intelligence of the most practical people in the world, the more cautious and responsible statesmen of Europe will lightly enter upon a war so vast and so terrible that all the incidents in the bloody struggle under the Southern Cross would be crowded into a single one of its battle-fields? The answer to that question lies in the nervous distrust of themselves, and the still greater distrust of popular agitation, which characterizes all the present rulers of Europe. An infinitesimal risk of diplomatic friction is sufficient to pre-



vent decisive steps being taken in international matters, even where great good might possibly result from an active policy. The impassioned movement which is still proceeding on the Continent for intervention on behalf of the Boers, has never altered a word in diplomatic despatches. Astute statesmen preferred to employ the agitation for their own ends, and to deprecate it good-humoredly when it threatened to become dangerous. They know that a single word addressed by Napoleon III. to the Austrian Ambassador was sufficient to convince Europe that war between the two Powers was imminent, and that by convincing Europe, it actually made war unavoidable. The *status quo* has now become a religion in Europe. Everywhere there is a fearful, almost superstitious, dread of uttering an unconsidered word which might alarm foreign suspicion or pander to domestic passion. Even the Armenians must be abandoned to their fate, lest some inconsiderable element of friction should disturb the placid relations of the European Powers.

All this, it may indeed be urged, points to the postponement of war rather than to the assurance of peace. It indicates no lightening of the burden of armaments, and offers, at best, but the lesser of two evils. Therein lies Europe's danger; and it may indeed be doubted whether sudden destruction in the cataclysm of universal war is less to be feared than the continuous decay of the social organism, the shackling of civilization, and the ultimate political revolt which Militarism must bring about. But, if war be only deferred, it can hardly be doubted that social enlightenment will end in the decline of Militarism. Other evils as great have passed away. Belief in the permanence of any evil institution means despair as to the continuity of human progress. Militarism has been heavily shaken by the events of the South African War. The decline has already gone so far that its adequacy, even for the purposes for which it is intended, is a matter of doubt among soldiers themselves. A comprehensive inquiry into the whole subject is the best way to bring about reform; and if such an inquiry were carried out by a Commission representing men of science and men of affairs, as well as soldiers and politicians, there can be little doubt that the trembling basis of a pretended necessity upon which Militarism rests would be swept away, to the great benefit of Europe and of the rest of the world.

JEAN DE BLOCH.